

# Department of Human Services

Prepared by the  
DHS Office of  
Communications  
(517) 373-7394



## Articles in Today's Clips Tuesday, February 27, 2007

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-7
Adoption	8-9
Vulnerable Adults	10
Domestic Violence	11
Child Support	12
Juvenile Justice	13
Health Care	14-17
Welfare Reform	18-20
News Advisory	21

\*Important story at this spot

**The Monroe Evening News**SATURDAY,  
FEBRUARY 24, 2007

## Local man sentenced in child abuse case

A Monroe man was sentenced to serve 2 to 8 years in prison for causing injuries to his infant daughter last summer.

Antoine F. Adolphues, 27, of 502 Conant Ave., was sentenced by Monroe County Circuit Judge Michael W. LaBeau on a charge of child abuse-second degree.

In addition to the time in prison, Mr. Adolphues must take psychological and impulse control counseling. He also must take educational and vocational training and pay \$120 fines and costs.

Although he had denied harming his daughter while he cared for her in July, when she was less than a month old, Mr. Adolphues pleaded no contest to the child abuse charge in January.

His daughter, Joishea, now 8 months old, was injured July 20. She suffered a brain hemorrhage, a skull fracture and other injuries. A doctor who specializes in child abuse cases testified in a September court hearing that the infant was injured and suffered shaken

baby syndrome.

For agreeing to plead no contest to second-degree child abuse, the Monroe County Prosecutor's Office dropped a first-degree child abuse charge, which carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison. A no contest plea is treated as a guilty plea in the court of law.

First-degree child abuse means the defendant intentionally harmed the victim. Second-degree child abuse means injuries were suffered through a reckless, but not intentional, act.

The baby's mother, Feltman (Denise) Rader, has supported Mr. Adolphues. She had maintained that the child was injured during a difficult birth. But medical experts said the child suffered injuries from repetitive shaking.

The Monroe Police Department investigated the case. Mr. Adolphues has remained in jail since his arrest in July. He was represented by Monroe attorney Jahn Landis.



# monroenews.com

Informing Monroe County, Michigan for more than 180 years

February 27, 2007

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Forums](#) | [This week's ads](#) | [My Newspaper Account](#) | [Place a classified ad](#)

GO

## ► Interact

[E-mail this to a friend](#)

[Print this story](#)

## ► Quick Find

[School Closings](#)

[Archive](#)

[Bedford Now](#)

[Calendar](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Delivery](#)

[Golf guide](#)

[Monroe Parent](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Obituaries](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

[Past polls](#)

[Road Watch](#)

[Store](#)

[Subscriptions & Renewal](#)

[TV Listings](#)

[High School Football](#)

[High School Basketball](#)

## ► Special Features

[Arts & Entertainment](#)

[Business](#)

[Careers](#)

[Classroom](#)

[Police/fire blotter](#)

[Prime Times](#)

[Living](#)

[Multimedia](#)

[RSS](#)

[Saving Sense](#)

[This Week's Ads](#)

[Your Neighbor](#)

[Your Health](#)

[Your Health for Kids](#)

[Anniversary](#)

[Announcement](#)

[Birth Announcement](#)

[Engagement](#)

[Announcement](#)

[Graduation](#)

[Announcement](#)

[Letters to the editor](#)

[Obituary Notice](#)

# Baby dies in apparent accident

story updated February 26, 2007 11:20AM

FRENCHTOWN TOWNSHIP - A Frenchtown Township infant died Sunday apparently of accidental suffocation after sleeping with his father on the sofa.

Advertisement

Emergency crews rushed to the 8400 block of Maurice St. in the Frenchtown Villa mobile home community on a report of an unconscious infant. The baby, Ethan Maxwell Aldridge, 1½ months old, later was pronounced dead at Mercy Memorial Hospital.

Monroe County Sheriff's Detective Joseph Hammond said it appears the infant was sleeping with his father and possibly suffocated when he rolled partially on top of the baby.

"At this stage of the investigation, it appears to be an accident," Detective Hammond said.

An autopsy was scheduled. The Monroe County Prosecutor's Office will review the report once it is completed.

The Frenchtown Township Fire Department and Monroe County Ambulance Service responded to the scene shortly before 9:30 a.m. Detectives Hammond and Dave Davison are investigating.

Anyone with information is asked to call 240-7533 or 240-7765.



[E-mail this to a friend](#)

[Subscribe](#)

[Print this story](#)

[XML](#)

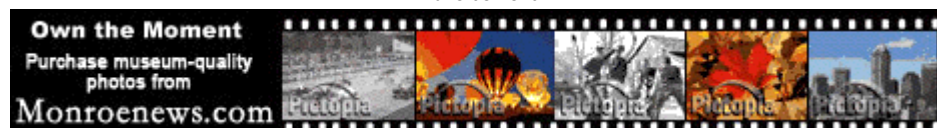
## ► Special Sections



Prime Times



Advertisement



{Classifieds} [Employment](#) | [For Rent](#) | [Merchandise](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Service Directory](#)

By using our site you agree to the [Terms of Service](#) © 2005 The Monroe Publishing Company. All Rights Reserved

[Contact us](#) [Terms of use](#) [Privacy statement](#)

# MORNING SUN

---

## Molester gets tough sentence

By [LINDA GITTLEMAN](#)  
Gratiot Managing Editor

Exceeding the sentencing guidelines, Gratiot County Circuit Judge Jeffrey Martlew sentenced a 51 year-old Ionia man to 22 to 35 years in prison for molesting his stepdaughter.

The man, who remains unnamed in order to protect the identity of his victims, was found guilty Jan 18 on all three counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Sentencing guidelines indicated a sentence of about six to 11 years, Gratiot County Prosecutor Keith Kushion said. But Martlew doubled it, saying the man was "beyond rehabilitation."

Even though the man admitted he had molested his biological daughter and his niece, on Monday he still maintained that he did not have sex with his stepdaughter before she was 16.

Martlew said he didn't believe a word he was saying and neither did the jury. It was obvious, he said, that the man "would never accept responsibility for his acts."

He said he doubled the sentence in order to protect society.

"Because of the heinous act - he sexually assaulted a young child - and his lack of remorse, he's still a danger," Martlew said after the sentencing.

Kushion said he argued for a tougher sentence because of a new law that went into effect in August 2006. Someone arrested and convicted after that date of molesting a youngster under the age of 13 -as one of the counts stated that the Ionia man did - would have to receive a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years.

Because Martlew exceeded the sentencing guidelines, the earliest the Ionia man will be eligible for parole is after he's served 22 years in prison.

Both the man's biological daughter and his niece testified about the abuse they had experienced as children, but the statutes of limitations had run out. He was only charged with molesting his stepdaughter, who is now 21.

Click here to return to story:

[http://www.themorningsun.com/stories/022707/loc\\_sentence001.shtml](http://www.themorningsun.com/stories/022707/loc_sentence001.shtml)



## 'Family friend' accused of molesting young girl

73-year-old could spend life in prison.

By Norb Franz

Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 73-year-old man could spend the rest of his life behind bars if he's convicted of molesting a young girl at her Warren home.

Law enforcement officials said Eugene Blackmon, who most recently resided in Southfield, was a family friend of the girl.

According to court records, the alleged sexual misconduct occurred between September 2001 and May 2002 -- a period during which the girl resided in Warren.

The girl was 11 or 12 years old at the time, Warren police said. The allegations came to light recently when she told her mother, who contacted police.

"It's not unusual in these type of cases (for victims) to delay disclosure," said Macomb County assistant prosecutor Molly Zappitell, pointing to the girl's youthful age.

Blackmon turned himself in earlier this month to police.

The retiree is charged with one count of first-degree criminal sexual conduct -- an offense involving penetration and punishable by up to life in prison. He also faces three counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct, a 15-year felony.

A court hearing to determine whether evidence shows Blackmon should stand trial was scheduled for Feb. 22, but the case was postponed to March 22 before 37th District Judge Walter Jakubowski.

Blackmon remains in the Macomb County Jail in lieu of \$25,000 bond.

Attempts by The Macomb Daily on Monday to reach defense attorney Timothy Barkovic for comment were unsuccessful.

Officials did not divulge the nature of Blackmon's relationship to the girl's family. However, Warren Detective Sgt. James Matheney said it was not unusual for Blackmon to have been at the girl's home.

"There's no indication to believe there were other victims," Zappitell added.

Click here to return to story:

[http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/022707/loc\\_20070227003.shtml](http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/022707/loc_20070227003.shtml)

# British officials are considering taking custody of obese boy

COURTNEY FRENCH

*Associated Press Writer*

LONDON — Authorities are considering taking an 8-year-old boy who weighs 218 pounds into protective custody unless his mother improves his diet, officials said Monday. Social service officials will meet with family members Tuesday to discuss the health of Connor McCreaddie, who weighs more than three times the average for his age.

"The worst case would be Connor getting taken into care. He is well cared for," the boy's mother, Nicola McKeown, told ITV television.

A spokeswoman for health officials in Wallsend, North Tyneside, 300 miles north of London, said the hearing was part of a process that could eventually lead to Connor being taken into protective care. She declined to comment further.

The health agencies organizing the meeting said they "have been working with the family over a prolonged period of time and will continue to do so."

Officials would not say whether Connor suffered from a medical condition that led to his obesity, citing privacy issues.

An unidentified health official was quoted as telling The Sunday Times that taking custody of Connor would be a last resort, but said the family had repeatedly failed to attend appointments with nurses, nutritionists and social workers.

"Child abuse is not just about hitting your children or sexually abusing them, it is also about neglect," the official was quoted as saying.

Dr. Colin Waine, the director of the National Obesity Forum in Nottingham, England, called

Connor's lifestyle "extremely dangerous," adding he is at risk of developing diabetes in his early teens, and cardiovascular and nervous system problems in his 20s.

"He's really at risk of dying by the time he's 30," Waine said.

Dr. Michael Markiewicz, a pediatrician, agreed.

"I'm not saying they can't care for him, but what they are doing is through the way they are treating him and feeding him, they are slowly killing him," he said.

Connor's case attracted national attention after his mother allowed an ITV News crew to film his day-to-day life over the course of a month.

Connor's mother said he steals and hides food, frustrating her efforts to help him. He eats double or triple what a normal seven-year-old would have, she said.

"If I didn't give him enough at teatime then he would just go on at us all night for snacks and stuff," she told ITV.

Connor, who lives with his mother and sister, has difficulty dressing and washing himself, misses school regularly because of poor health, and is targeted by bullies.

"People pick on us because of my weight. They call us fat. It makes us feel sick of the nutters always shouting at us," Connor told ITV.



## Children fare best with both mother and father

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

My wife is passionate about our sons' education. She looks over homework, helps them as needed (especially in math, where, as a journalist, I am woefully insufficient), and even checks their grades online.

Our boys are all good students. If any of them gets a "C" or worse on a test, however, she asks plenty of questions to the offending son.

My response? A "C" on one test isn't going to ruin his life forever. The son will survive. Let's move on.

Our three sons, all teenagers now, benefit from both responses. My wife keeps them on their toes academically, and I try to keep their education in perspective. We complement each other. We're a team.

That's just one example of how two-parent households -- a mother and a father, with different outlooks -- should work. My wife and I both want the best for our three sons. We respect each other as a couple, and our sons see this and benefit from it.

I've long been a proponent of traditional families, with mom and dad raising their children as one household.

Despite a new study on adoptive parents, no one in history has -- or ever will -- improve on the traditional family unit. The study, by sociologists at Indiana University in Bloomington and the University of Connecticut and published this month in the American Sociological Review, claims that adoptive parents invest more time and money in their children than biological parents do.

According to one report on the study, "In particular, the researchers said, adoptive parents had a pronounced edge over single-parent and stepparent families."

Duh. That analysis, however, has nothing to do with whether adoptive parents are better than a traditional biological mother and father.

Single-parent and stepparent families often work. I'm not judging anyone here. But those types of families should not be our first choice.

I know three families who have adopted children. All of them had two or more biological children of their own, then adopted one or more children as well. One family adopted a Korean child, the other two families adopted children from Russia.

All of these families are healthy and strong. All include a mother and father who both take active, complementary roles in raising their children. The adoptive children are just as much family as the biological offspring are.

"One of the reasons adoptive parents invest more is that they really want children, and they go to extraordinary means to have them," a study co-author claimed.

Adoptive parents choose their children, of course. So do many biological parents. A significant number of children are "accidents," but plenty of married couples choose to have children and are able to do so.

The costs -- social, financial and with biological children, physical -- are great for all. Committed families pay those costs willingly and gladly.

Whether children are biological or adopted isn't the issue. Families with both a mother and father do well. The study doesn't refute this. If it's just trying to expand adoption, more power to the authors.

But if it's a subtle attack on traditional families, I'm not going to buy in. Traditional families increasingly are under pressure from today's anything-goes American society. My sons need me as a father, and my wife as



a mother. Both of us are essential to our children's well-being.

What's the best life has to offer? That's what my wife and I seek for our family. If that makes us traditional, so be it. "Progressive" is not always better. If the old ways are best, why change?

Children need both a mother and father, preferably their own. Life experiences in all cultures for all time prove this. If that's not possible, adoption offers a wonderful alternative. v

Saginaw News Copy Editor Bill Cornish and his wife thank God for the gifts of their three children, who they are training to make their own ways in the world.

©2007 Saginaw News

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



**ourMidland.com**  
from the Midland Daily News

02/26/2007

## **Our View: Immediate attention prescribed for Colonial Villa issue**

An outbreak of illness --potentially a norovirus, according to the Midland County Health Department -- had staff and residents of Colonial Villa assisted living center feeling sick.

But that seems to be the beginning of problems brewing at the senior home. While inquiring about the sickness, the Daily News also learned that the place is operating without a license and is under investigation by the state Department of Human Services for that lack of licensure.

That has us feeling a bit queasy.

Senior citizens are among our most vulnerable populations and they, along with their family members, should be able to rest easy knowing that the place they choose to live and receive care at is in compliance with state rules.

The situation also begs the question -- How did the state not know that a 51-bed assisted living facility was operating in Midland without a license?

The state and Tendercare, Colonial Villa's parent organization, appear to have let these residents and their families down. This problem needs immediate attention, and appropriate corrective action.

*©Midland Daily News 2007*

This is a printer friendly version of an article from [www.Monroenews.com](http://www.Monroenews.com)  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

Article published Feb 26, 2007

## **Man in serious condition after weekend stabbing**

A Monroe man is in serious condition this morning with a stab wound he suffered during an apparent domestic incident Saturday night.

The victim only has been identified as a 41-year-old man who argued with his girlfriend inside a house in the 300 block of Winchester St. Monroe police Detective Bryan Gee reported it is believed a relative of the girlfriend intervened and stabbed the man in the abdomen about 7:15 p.m.

Detective Gee said the investigation is continuing and all details are unavailable.

After being stabbed, the man ran to his home in the 400 block of Eastchester St., where the Monroe Fire Department met and treated him.

The victim was taken to Mercy Memorial Hospital, then flown by Life Flight helicopter to St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, Toledo.

No arrests have been made.

---

[<<Back](#)

## County Pulls in Large Amount of Child Support

Feb 26, 2007 04:28 PM EST

The Ingham County Prosecutor's Office pulled in over \$700,000 in back child support last year. The money was collected from criminal defendants through a grant-funded warrant program. That's a 25% increase over last year and the largest amount collect in six years.

Ingham County Prosecutor Stuart Dunnings says, "these funds are returned to the families and taxpayers, who are often forced to support families on welfare, due to neglect by the non-custodial parent." Over 2-million dollars total has been collected by staff so far.



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2007 WorldNow and WLNS. All Rights Reserved.  
For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).

Close Window

Send To Printer

## Mandatory life terms to be curbed?

### Yee's bill would give young murderers with 'special circumstances' chance for parole

By Steve Geissinger, MEDIANEWS SACRAMENTO BUREAU  
Inside Bay Area

Article Last Updated: 02/27/2007 02:49:06 AM PST

SACRAMENTO — A lawmaker who was a Bay Area school psychologist said Monday he is proposing that young, first-degree murderers no longer face life sentences without parole, even if the homicide involved "special circumstances" such as gang, cop or hate killings.

The measure by Democratic Assemblyman Leland Yee of

San Francisco, who wants to see more of those who made mistakes at an early age rehabilitated, comes as the governor and Legislature are facing an array of problems with sentencing laws and overcrowded prisons.

But a Yee aide said SB 999 — which would alter crime-fighting Proposition 115, approved 17 years ago by voters — is independent of others' reform efforts.

Children's rights advocates hailed the introduction of the measure as bringing California closer to universal justice standards while victims' rights groups attacked the legislation as a step backward in popular, anti-crime efforts.

Yee's legislation, officially the California Juvenile Life Without Parole Reform Act, would amend the penal code so anyone under 18 who commits murder with "special circumstances" could not be sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. Judges could still sentence them to 25-years to life, but with the possibility of parole.

"Special circumstance" murders include previous homicides; gang killings; hate murders; using bombs that could have killed others; murdering cops, firefighters, judges, prosecutors and court witnesses; and homicides committed during violent crimes, ranging from rape and kidnapping to carjacking and child molesting.

Yee, who received a doctorate in child psychology from the University of Hawaii, said in a statement that "children have an extraordinary capacity for rehabilitation."

If an unwanted twist developed — hate groups or gangs using the new law as an incentive to pressure those younger than 18 into murdering — the scenario is still an argument for passage of the bill, supporters said.

"There's certainly that chance and it justifies the need for this bill because it shows how susceptible they (youths) are because their brain has not been fully developed," said Yee spokesman Adam Keigwin.

"It's yet another reason why someone like that is so vulnerable to something like this and should be able to be granted rehabilitation services," Keigwin said.

Harriet Salarno, president of Crime Victims United of California, opposes Yee's bill.

"These are very, very violent offenders we're talking about and there are some people who can't be rehabilitated," Salarno said. "It's just so black and white. This is not good for California."

But those who believe some youths have been wronged by California's justice system support the bill.

"As a society we've learned a lot since the time we started using life without parole for children," said Elizabeth Calvin of Children's Rights Advocates.

Michelle Leighton, of the Center for Law and Global Justice at the University of San Francisco, said California "is out of step with international standards of justice."

The bill would require a two-thirds vote in the Legislature since it amends a voter initiative.

Michigan Report

February 26, 2007

## **GOVERNORS URGE FUNDING FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE**

The National Governors Association asked Congress to place a priority on funding for the State Children's Health Insurance Program. In a letter dated Monday, the association, which is meeting in Washington, D.C., this week, argued that some states would run out of money for the program if additional funds are not provided before it is reauthorized.

The S-CHIP allows states to use Medicaid funds to offer low-cost health insurance to children who would not otherwise qualify for assistance.

"Funding to address shortfalls is critical as states will no longer have enough federal funds to support their programs as early as March," the governors said in the [letter](#) to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada), Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) and Minority Leader John Boehner (R-Ohio).

The letter asked not only for additional funding for the current S-CHIP, but also additional funding for the reauthorization of the program. The governors also asked for more flexibility in administering the program.

February 27, 2007

## Child Health Care Splits White House and States

By [ROBERT PEAR](#)

WASHINGTON, Feb. 26 — Governors clashed with the White House on Monday over the future of the popular Children's Health Insurance Program, an issue that some members of both parties said was as important as money for the Iraq war.

In the session at the White House, when President Bush reported on progress of the war, governors pressed him to provide more money so they could guarantee health insurance for children. In response, administration officials said states should make better use of the money they already had.

Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia, [a Republican](#), said afterward, "Health care for children ought to be a priority, irrespective of anyone's views on the war."

Georgia will exhaust its allotment of federal money for the Children's Health Insurance Program within three months, Mr. Perdue said. Thirteen other states expect to run out by September, according to data released here at the winter meeting of the [National Governors Association](#).

Governors said the Clinton and Bush administrations had encouraged them to expand children's coverage and had granted waivers allowing them to cover parents and even some childless adults.

Having successfully expanded the health insurance programs in their states, some governors now suggest that the Bush administration is pulling the safety net out from under many children.

In his budget this month, Mr. Bush said he wanted to return the program to its "original objective" of covering children with family incomes less than twice the poverty level. Budget documents note that 16 states cover children above that level and that "one state, New Jersey, covers children up to 350 percent of the federal poverty level."

A family of four is classified poor if its annual income is less than \$20,650.

An influential member of Congress said Monday that he would not be taking up White House proposals to restrict eligibility and financing for the child health program.

"I have absolutely no intention of moving the president's proposals through our subcommittee," said the lawmaker, Representative Frank Pallone Jr., Democrat of New Jersey.

Mr. Pallone is chairman of the Health Subcommittee of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has authority over the children's program.

Speaker [Nancy Pelosi](#) said Monday that "Democrats in Congress understand the urgency" of the problem and would provide

money to the 14 states that did not have enough to cover their current enrollment. Although Mr. Bush would reduce federal payments for adults and for children with family incomes above 200 percent of the poverty level, Mr. Pallone said states should have discretion to cover children above 200 percent of the poverty level and adults in some circumstances, too.

“In New Jersey, we made a decision to go up to 350 percent of the poverty level, because we have the highest cost of living in the country,” Mr. Pallone said.

Likewise, he said, New Jersey found that covering adults increased the likelihood that their children would stay on the rolls.

“The hallmark of all this is flexibility,” Mr. Pallone said. “A robust Children’s Health Insurance Program is an important part of any effort to try to achieve universal coverage.”

The federal government spends \$5 billion a year on the program. Mr. Bush wants to continue that level, and he is seeking an “additional allotment” of \$4.8 billion over the next five years.

States would need substantially more to continue their programs with current eligibility rules and benefits. New estimates from the [Congressional Budget Office](#) show that the states face shortfalls of \$700 million this year and a total shortage of \$13.4 billion from 2008 to 2012.

Gov. Jim Douglas of Vermont, a Republican, said the Bush proposals would jeopardize his state’s phenomenal success in covering children. In Vermont, he said, fewer than 4 percent of the children are uninsured, and “we don’t want to lose ground.”

Bush administration officials emphasized that states received a fixed amount of federal money each year, and they said individual children did not have a legal entitlement to benefits. [Michael O. Leavitt](#), secretary of health and human services, said he would work with Congress to find “a short-term solution” for states exhausting their allotments this year. He said states could avoid shortfalls by managing their programs better.

In his experience as governor of Utah, Mr. Leavitt said, “when we were out of an allotment, we just discontinued enrolling people until we had room.” Likewise, he said, states could cover more people if they provided less comprehensive benefits.

Gov. Ted Strickland of Ohio, a Democrat, said: “If we don’t get the money we need, children will go without coverage.”

“In the meeting with the president and Secretary Leavitt,” Mr. Strickland said, “when questions were raised about children maybe having to be removed from the program or eligible children not being able to participate, we were told that that was basically a management problem.”

Gov. [Jon Corzine](#) of New Jersey, a Democrat, said that under the president’s proposals “we will end up having fewer children covered.” That prospect “was chilling to some of us,” Mr. Corzine said, adding that states wanted to avoid “rationing health care to our most vulnerable and our most needy.”

Gov. [Edward G. Rendell](#) of Pennsylvania, a Democrat, said Mr. Bush’s budget request was “clearly insufficient” to continue coverage for the six million children enrolled in the program.

Many governors want to expand the program, which they see as a foundation for their efforts to expand coverage generally.



Mr. Rendell framed the issue as a choice, asking: "Should we be giving tax cuts to billionaires and millionaires or should we be giving health care to children? Should we make health care for children, at the very least, an entitlement?"

Domestic policy is in a straitjacket because of the cost of the war, the cost of tax cuts and the president's plan to balance the budget within five years, Mr. Rendell said.

Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) of California, a Republican, said federal aid was essential to his \$12 billion plan for universal health coverage. Mr. Schwarzenegger said that in a private meeting he told the president, "We need the federal government's help." He did not say whether he got a commitment.

[Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

---

## **Nitz: State powerless to handle gas prices**

By MICHAEL C. GUILMETTE JR. / Niles Daily Star

*Monday, February 26, 2007 11:04 AM EST*

NILES - Gas prices, state taxes, the war in Iraq and illegal immigration were the issues Neil Nitz heard Saturday during a stop in Niles.

The 78th District Republican stopped by the Prime Table Restaurant to speak with constituents, two weeks after making a similar stop in Dowagiac. While only two people showed up for the occasion, both still had plenty to ask the representative from Baroda.

“What can be done about gas prices?” asked Richard Phillips, a Howard Township resident, echoing the same topic Nitz faced two weeks ago during his last visit.

Phillips noted gasoline prices in the region fluctuating as much as 25 to 30 cents per gallon in a single day, but Nitz said there is little that can be done regionally.

“There really isn't anything the state can do to control the price of gas,” Nitz said, adding one of the few options available is for the state to not charge sales taxes.

While Nitz was pessimistic about affecting gas prices directly, he did use the opportunity to promote alternative fuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel.

“By the end of the year, the state will be producing 250 million gallons [of ethanol],” Nitz said. He also said three or four more ethanol plants that could produce an additional 50 million gallons each are planned for construction in Michigan.

Nitz pointed out that while ethanol is not a complete solution, the use of alternative fuels could bring the price of gasoline down due to the competition created. He did say more people would likely have to buy vehicles with flex-fuel engines, pointing out his own vehicle can run on 85 percent ethanol fuel.

Phillips was also critical of the war in Iraq, telling Nitz “Bush has really

screwed it up.”

Gil MacNeill, who owns a business in Buchanan, held a different opinion of the war's progress.

“I think we're making good headway with the war,” MacNeill said.

Although Nitz said the war effort was largely a federal issue, he did offer some opinions of his own, saying the U.S. needs to stay in the Middle East.

“This was started a long time before Bush came into office,” Nitz said. When Phillips challenged him on the 3,000 service members killed in Iraq, Nitz responded by saying, “Every war is not pleasant.”

Nitz added the state has safeguards in place to make sure military personnel from Michigan do not have to be concerned about utilities being shut off while they are stationed in a war zone.

Turning to illegal immigration, Nitz again said the issue was largely a federal one, but he recognized the dilemma many business owners face.

“The majority who work for us,” Nitz said, referring to his Baroda farm, “are of Spanish descent.” While he noted it is against the law to hire illegal immigrants, he said employers are hesitant of asking too many questions of workers' backgrounds out of fear of violating federal civil rights legislation.

Still, he said migrant labor is necessary, and the federal government needs to act on the problem.

“We need a guest worker program,” Nitz said. “We need legal immigration.”

The last topic of the morning was the state budget.

“There was talk of cutting the core budget, but now we're seeing a 4 percent increase,” Nitz said. “Since I have been in office, there has never been a budget smaller than the year before.”

He pointed out that while the Single Business Tax has been repealed, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's proposed 2 percent sales tax of services - such as legal fees, haircuts and movie theater tickets - would net the state \$1.5 billion in

revenue, and an additional \$1.1 billion in new tax revenues from other sources would easily replace the \$1.8 billion in revenue lost by ending the SBT.

Nitz, however, was not positive about the prospects of further taxation.

“[Gov. Granholm] has been planning on spending every penny that came in,” he said, adding there is no plan in place to send any new revenue to the state's budget stabilization fund.

Nitz did have his own ideas on stabilizing the state budget.

**“One thing I think would really help the budget would be to restrict the number of years a person can draw welfare if they are able-bodied,” he said.**

**Nitz said Indiana, Ohio and Illinois all have three- to five-year lifetime maximum welfare benefits, while Michigan has no maximum.**

**“I don't want to see anyone starving, but there are people who are fifth, sixth, seventh generation on welfare,” Nitz said. He said there is a proposal for Michigan to enact a four-year limit on welfare benefits for healthy people, limited further to two years at a time.**

**From:** Colleen Steinman <steinmac@MICHIGAN.GOV>  
**To:** <DHS-PRESSRELEASES@LISTSERV.MICHIGAN.GOV>  
**Date:** 2/27/2007 1:38:40 PM  
**Subject:** ATTN: Genesee County Media

Michigan Department of Human Services  
Media Advisory

Contact: Maureen Sorbet or Karen Stock (517) 373-7394

New Jobs Education & Training program helps put people back to work,  
preserves safety net  
Genesee County implements innovative welfare reform effort

**WHAT:** Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program media event  
JET was developed in partnership with the Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) and the Michigan Works! agencies to help welfare recipients become self-sufficient and permanently attached to the labor force. The JET approach fundamentally changes the way families move off welfare and become self-sufficient. Learn more about JET and hear clients' experiences in the program at this important event.

**WHEN:** Thursday, March 1, 2007,  
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

**WHERE:** Career Alliance, Inc.  
711 N. Saginaw Street, Suite 300  
Flint, Michigan 48503

**WHO:** Speakers at this event include:  
Marianne Udow, director, Michigan Department of Human Services.  
Andy Levin, deputy director, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth.  
Suzanne Howell, district manager, Michigan Rehabilitation Services District.  
Sheryl Thompson, director, Genesee County DHS.  
Pamela Loving, president/CEO, Career Alliance Inc.  
Cassandra Holder, client, JET pilot program in Genesee County.

###